

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 08082 262229Z

67

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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 8082

E.O. 11652: NGDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF LICINIO DE LA FUENTE

1. EMBOFF SPOKE OCTOBER 25 PRIVATELY WITH LICINIO DE LA FUENTE, THE FORMER FRANCO-ERA MINISTER OF LABOR AND NOW ON OF THE SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE POPULAR ALLIANCE. DE LA FUENTE (PROJECT) SAID HE EXPECTED THE POLITICAL REFORM BILL WOULD GET THROUGH THE CORTES WITHOUT MAJOR TROUBLE, THOUGH HE CONFIRMED THAT THE POPULAR ALLIANCE WOULD MAKE A DETERMINED EFFORT TO CHANGE FROM PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AS THE BASIS OF LOWER HOUSE ELECTION TO A MAJORITY SYSTEM WITH RUN-OFF. THE ALLIANCE WAS CONSIDERING WHAT OTHER POSITIONS IT MIGHT TAKE BUT HE WAS SURE IT WOULD NOT SUPPORT THE RECONSTITUTION OF A FRANCO-SYLE CORPORATE MAKEUP FOR THE
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PAGE 02 MADRID 08082 262229Z

PROPOSED UPPER HOUSE. THERE WAS A POSSIBLITY THAT THE

CURRENT CORTES REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE SYNDICAL SECTOR WOULD SEEK TO INTRODUCE A CORPORATE FLAVOR AND IT COULD BECOME TROUBLESOME. BUT THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE, LED BY FERNANDO SUAREZ, COULD BE EXPECTED TO REJECT SUCH SUGGESTIONS.

2. DE LA FUENTE, UNLIKE SOME OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE POPULAR ALLIANCE, HAS MAINTAINED A FAIRLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE KING. IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ANY CHANGES PROPOSED TO LIMIT THE POWERS OF THE KING WITH RESPECT TO REFERENDUM, DE LA FUENTE SAID THIS WOULD BE A DELICATE SUBJECT. IN HIS OWN VIEW, IN THE SHORT RUN IT COULD NOT BE EXPECTED THAT THE KING SIMPLY WOULD BECOME A "DECORATIVE MONARCH." UNTIL THINGS WERE UNDERWAY, HE WOULD HAVE TO EXERCISE MORE POWER THAN CUSTOMARY WITH EUROPEAN MONARCHS, THOUGH EVENTUALLY THE KING COULD BE EXPECTED TO ASSUME THE PREDOMINANTLY SYMBOLIC CHARACTER FOUND ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE. (IN THIS REMARK WE DETECT AN EDGE OF DIFFERENCE WITH FRAGA AND SOME OF THE OTHERS WHO ARE MORE DESIROUS OF IMMEDIATELY TRIMMING THE KING'S POWERS.)

3. OTHERWISE, HE THOUGHT THE BILL WOULD PROBABLY COME OUT RELATIVELY UNCHANGED, BUT HE DID BELIEVE THE POPULAR ALLIANCE WOULD PUSH FOR ONE OTHER SIGNIFICANT CHANGE, THE INSTITUTION OF A HIGHER MAJORITY THAN CURRENTLY ENVISAGED FOR PASSAGE OF FURTHER CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN THE NEW CORTES. HE AGREED THAT A GOODLY PORTION OF THE FRANCO-ERA CONSTITUTION WOULD HAVE TO BE CHANGED IN THE NEW CORTES BECAUSE WITH FRANCO DEAD, THESE THINGS WERE NO LONGER OPERATIVE. NONETHELESS, HE WAS AFRAID THE LOWER MAJORITIES CURRENTLY ENVISAGED WOULD LEAD TO THE RECURRENT LATIN MALAISE OF RE-WRITING THE CONSTITUTION EVERY TIME THERE WAS AN ELECTION. IN SUM, DE LA FUENTE THOUGHT THERE SHOULD BE A FORMULA THAT WOULD BALANCE THE NEED FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN THE NEXT CORTES WITH THE NEED TO PREVENT FREQUENT, FRIVOLOUS REFORM.

4. IN RESPECT OF THE ALLIANCE, HE SAID HE HAD JOINED IT IN PART TO BRING TO IT A "SOCIAL CONTENT," EVEN THOUGH THE ALLIANCE MUST BE CONSIDERED CONSERVATIVE. AND HE RECALLED FOR US THAT HIS SERVICE AS MINISTER OF LABOR HAD BROUGHT UPON HIM ACCUSATIONS OF BEING SOMEHOW LEFTIST

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MADRID 08082 262229Z

OR RADICAL BECAUSE OF HIS ADVOCACY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. IT WAS PREMATURE TO SAY HOW WELL THE ALLIANCE WOULD DO. OF OTHER GROUPS WOULD FOLLOW THEIR LEAD, THEN THERE WOULD BE A COHERENT POLITICAL GAME IN SPAIN. IF FURTHER COALITIONS DID NOT OCCUR, HE EXPECTED THE ALLIANCE WOULD PROBABLY DO BETTER, BUT IT WAS IN THE INTEREST OF SPAIN THAT THREE OR FOUR LARGE COHERENT POLITICAL GROUPINGS EMERGE.

5. DE LA FUENTE IS A MODERATE, DECENT MAN WITH FEW POLITICAL ENEMIES. HIS POLITICAL VIEWS ARE PROBABLY CLOSER TO FRAGA'S THAN TO THE REST OF THE ASSEMBLAGE.
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